CHAPTER III

ECOLOGICAL RESOURCES

III. ECOLOGICAL RESOURCES

This chapter summarizes the status of ecological resources and the actions of public agencies and citizen groups in the management and preservation of these resources.

A. ISSUES AND OVERVIEW

Open space and natural habitat continue to be reduced in Fairfax County, primarily as a result of development (residential housing and commercial) and road building. As this resource is reduced, increased emphasis must be placed on protecting, preserving, and enhancing the remaining open space and natural habitat in Fairfax County.

Fairfax County contains a total of 228,242 acres of land, excluding areas in roads, water, or small areas of land unable to be zoned or developed. Of this total, about 27,200 acres (11.9%) are in parks and recreation as of January, 2002. Another approximately 27,700 acres (12.1%) are vacant or in natural uses. However, this acreage cannot be considered as open space that is valuable for natural habitat. First, the park acreage consists of active recreation (ball fields, etc.) as well as passive recreation (stream valley parks, nature centers, etc.) Ball fields, while greatly needed in Fairfax County, do not do much for protecting natural habitat. In a like fashion, much private open space consists of mowed areas and isolated trees (not woodlands). Again, this does little for protecting natural habitat. Both active recreation areas and private open space, however, can help the environment by reducing storm water runoff (by allowing storm water to infiltrate into the soil).

Second, while the land that is vacant is often wooded, this land is subject to development. Considering the continuing rapid pace of development in Fairfax County, much of this land will soon become residential space, office space, retail space, etc., and not provide much in the way of protecting natural habitat.

Therefore, Fairfax County needs to undertake stronger efforts in order to protect, preserve, and enhance the environmentally sensitive open space in the County. These efforts include the establishment of a Countywide Natural Resource Inventory, followed by a Countywide Natural Resource Management Plan. Additionally, the County needs an aggressive program seeking easements on privately owned environmentally sensitive land and, as opportunities arise, to purchase environmentally sensitive land.

EQAC commends Fairfax ReLeaf, and their volunteers, in their reforestation efforts. EQAC also commends the Fairfax County Park Authority staff in their efforts toward a building a Baseline Natural Resource Inventory. EQAC supports the Fairfax County Park Authority in their work toward a Natural Resource

Management Plan (but urges the Park Authority to put a higher priority on finalizing this plan).
EQAC also commends the Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District and the Virginia Department of Forestry for their leadership in a number of activities that will lead to better management of storm water and protection of stream valleys. Additionally, EQAC commends the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust for pursuing and obtaining easements on privately owned environmentally sensitive land.

B. PROGRAMS, PROJECTS, AND ANALYSES

1. Fairfax County Park Authority

The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors created the Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA) in 1950, authorizing the Park Authority Board to make decisions concerning land acquisition, park development, and operations. As a result, Fairfax County has a system of parks that serve a number of uses, including active recreation such as sports, historic sites and buildings, and environmentally sensitive areas such as forests and stream valley lands.

a. Acquisition of Park Land by FCPA

The FCPA added approximately 1,551 acres in FY 2002. The transfer of open space land from the Board of Supervisors accounted for 1,194 of these acres. Much of the land from the Board of Supervisors was RPA dedications to the County, but also included were the transfer of deeds to several larger parcels such as Scott's Run Nature Preserve. With these 1,551 acres FCPA land holdings now total 21,615 acres at the end of 2002.

In 2003 (to July 2003), FCPA has added an additional 928 acres. These include an 18-acre addition to the Popes Head Estates Assemblage as well as additions to the Accotink Stream Valley Park and the Laurel Hill property.

b. Green Infrastructure/GIS Mapping

The Fairfax County Park Authority staff continues to develop a Natural Resource Inventory for the County's park system. In the past, a partial attempt at building a Countywide Baseline Natural Resource Inventory was done by the Ecological Resources Inventory Committee (ERIC). Unfortunately, sufficient funding was not furnished to compete this task and the partially complete ERIC database languished. Eventually, with changes in computer hardware and software, this database became unusable. Fairfax County, however, did not approve previous budget requests to convert the ERIC data to a GIS-compatible format. The Park Authority believes that it

would be better to generate new inventory data in a GIS-compatible format since the most recent ERIC data is now a decade old. EQAC is unconvinced that throwing out the ERIC data is wise.

However, progress has been made in that the FCPA has developed a modeling tool to identify significant natural and heritage resource areas for the Park Authority's resource protection and management efforts. Using the County's geographic information system (GIS), FCPA has produced a countywide map of "Green Infrastructure" based on a weighted analysis of significant environmental and historic features.

FCPA evaluated hydrology, tree cover, Chesapeake Bay Resource Protection Areas, wetlands, hydric soils, and unusual biological habitat as part of the natural resource analysis. The Park Authority also considered archaeological sites, County historic districts, and historic sites in the heritage resources evaluation. Proximity to existing parkland, other public lands, and open space was also factored into the analysis.

This Countywide Green Infrastructure Map appears to be a basis for the Natural Resource Inventory that EQAC has been recommending. However, it appears that this is more of a general tool rather than an actual resource inventory that includes flora and fauna. EQAC therefore continues to recommend that Fairfax County develop a Countywide Baseline Natural Resource Inventory to provide the detailed information to go along with the Countywide Green Infrastructure Map.

FCPA will use Countywide Green Infrastructure Map for projects such as prioritizing acquisition areas based on relative natural and heritage resource importance, and evaluating impacts of land development proposals. However, EQAC believes that the details mentioned above are needed to best prioritize acquisition areas.

c. Natural Resource Management Plan

In past reports, EQAC recommended that the County Board of Supervisors develop and implement a Countywide Natural Resource Management Plan. EQAC noted that in order to do this, two tasks need to be accomplished first: complete a Countywide Baseline Natural Resource Inventory (see above) and adopt a unified Natural Resource Conservation Policy.

EQAC's past recommendation on developing a Countywide Natural Resource Management Plan is being partially fulfilled by FCPA. As reported in EQAC's 2002 *Annual Report on the Environment*, the FCPA staff has completed a draft of its Natural Resource Management Plan (NRMP). This plan identifies the countywide and Park Authority programs and data sources related to natural resources and analyzes Park Authority

policies and the Park Comprehensive Plan provisions affecting natural resources. It addresses natural resources management and planning on parklands within the general issues categories of Vegetation, Wildlife, Stormwater Management and Erosion Control, and Human Impact. EQAC continues to recommend that this FCPA effort be expanded Countywide.

Unfortunately, the adoption of this NRMP has not yet taken place. Last year EQAC reported that this draft was undergoing internal Park Authority review and was scheduled to be presented to the Park Authority for adoption in the fall of 2002. However, this did not occur. The draft is still undergoing review and updates and is now scheduled to be presented to the Park Authority Board in the fall of 2003. Since this plan has taken years to get this far, EQAC strongly urges the Park Authority Board to finish this process and adopt the plan.

d. Greenways Program

Implementation of the Greenways Program began in 1997 with the Park Authority staff working with citizens groups participating in the Parks Round Table partnership. Unfortunately, the Parks Round Table has lapsed. The Greenways concept is furthered through the County Comprehensive Plan, and through Park Authority policy, to "identify, protect, and enhance an integrated network of ecologically valuable land and surface waters for present and future residents of Fairfax County." FCPA helps accomplish this goal through the acquisition of land for Stream Valley Parks, and the development of a comprehensive trail network.

As is the case with Environmental Quality Corridors (EQCs), the ecological boundaries of Greenways may include both public and private open space. Under voluntary cooperative resource management agreements, the Park Authority could offer technical assistance for enhancing the Greenway benefits of private property. This could include the landowner voluntarily granting conservation easements. Conservation easements have been used successfully by groups such as the Nature Conservancy to protect environmentally sensitive lands, and the Nature Conservancy has found that many landowners support the goal of preserving these environmentally sensitive lands.

EQAC notes that the Greenways Program is valuable in that it can expand the protection of environmentally sensitive stream valleys. However, this program should be expanded aggressively through the acquisition of conservation easements, where possible, on private properties. As noted above, the Nature Conservancy has been successful in this approach. Additionally, the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust (NVCT) has now obtained a number of easements in Northern Virginia, showing that this approach in Fairfax County is feasible. The Board of Supervisors should

continue its cooperation with NVCT and aggressively pursue easements aimed at protecting and preserving environmentally sensitive lands.

e. Invasive Plant Control Efforts

Invasive plants are a problem because they can out-compete and replace native species. This change in vegetation disrupts the life cycles of many flora and fauna that depend on native vegetation. The Park Authority's Strategic Plan includes a strategy to develop invasive plant guidelines for consideration by the Environmental Coordinating Committee as a countywide standard. Green Spring Garden Park has developed a draft document intended to guide the park's activities with regard to invasive exotic plants. The guidelines include monitoring for infestations, avoiding the spread of non-native garden plants to natural areas in the park, and cooperating with other horticultural organizations to develop information and programs related to invasive plants.

Huntley Meadows Park has been previously funded for an active management program at Huntley Meadows that provided valuable information for use at other sites around the County. They continue to seek funding sources to continue their invasive control projects.

f. Riparian and Bioengineering Projects

The Fairfax County Park Authority is working on several projects that will affect the biological health of the County's streams.

- Renovation of the old farm pond at Mason District Park started in March, 2003. This project will replace the existing dam, install a new outlet structure, regrade the pond basin and surrounding area, install an overlook at the pond edge, and create a wetland area with boardwalk access. This should control many of the smaller storm events, which are currently causing erosion and degradation of the downstream, reaches of Turkeycock Run.

- The Park Authority is completing negotiations with VDOT to allow bioengineering restoration-stabilization of approximately 1,800 feet of Turkeycock below the Mason District Park farm pond. This will compensate for impacts associated with the Springfield Interchange project. Restoration will likely begin in winter, 2003. (VDOT has indicated that they would welcome more opportunities to partner with County agencies on future bioengineering projects.)

- FCPA is making improvements to retrofit a DPWES storm water management facility upstream from the pond at Hidden Pond Park. This project went out for bid in June, 2003 and will add BMP controls to an

existing peak shaving facility and begin controlling runoff from smaller streams. Benefits from this project include reducing downstream erosion (allowing the stream to regain some biological health). The second phase of this project will include reconstruction of a sediment-filled forebay.

- Huntley Meadows Park has been affected by erosion resulting from increased runoff due to upstream development for several years. Sediments are carried into the park's wetlands, reducing water depth and adversely affecting aquatic life. The Park Authority is working with DPWES on a park bond project in Barnyard Run to use mainly bioengineering stabilization practices to prevent further channel erosion and restore upstream reaches to a healthy condition. The Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District is providing significant assistance in the design of this project.

g. Fairfax County Park Foundation

Fairfax County citizens can donate to the Fairfax County parks through the Fairfax County Park Foundation. The Fairfax County Park Foundation is a 501(C)3 not-for-profit organization and donations are tax deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law. To date, this foundation has raised more the $480,000 to support County parks and open space. If you are interested, contact them at:

Fairfax County Park Foundation
12055 Government Center Parkway
Fairfax, VA 22035
(703) 324-8581
SupportParks@aol.com
http://www.FairfaxCountyParkFoundation.com

2. Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority

The Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority (NVRPA) acquired five acres of new parkland during 2002 – a five-acre addition to Bull Run Regional Park.

NVRPA continues their efforts towards environmentally friendly management of their golf courses, using materials from the Audubon Society's *Cooperative Sanctuary System*, and Virginia Division of Soil and Water Conservation's Urban *Nutrient Management Program for Gold Courses*. Additionally, some areas on their golf courses have been designated as out-of-play and allowed to "return to nature".

NVRPA is active in attempting to mitigate trees lost in Northern Virginia. They planted over 2,000 trees in Fairfax County in their parks during 2002. In Bull

Run Regional Park, they are planning plantings of native vegetation along the shorelines of Bull and Cub Runs as a replacement for the mature trees being lost to flooding and erosion.

In Fairfax County, NVRPA is continuing their efforts to increase bluebird habitat and promote population growth. They have installed (and regularly monitor) boxes at Pohick Bay, Occoquan, Meadowlark, Bull Run, and Upton Regional Parks. They have installed more boxes at the Pohick Bay Golf Course and along the W&OD Trail. These efforts are in cooperation with the Virginia Bluebird Society.

Like Fairfax County Park Authority, Northern Virginia Conservation Trust, and others, NVRPA is devoting many hours to a dedicated effort to eliminate invasive plants. These efforts have taken place at Upton Hill Regional Park, Meadowlark Botanical Gardens, and the Pohick Bay Golf Course.

NVRPA is developing general management plans and natural resource management plans for their parklands in order to protect the important natural and cultural resources located in these parks. These plans include detailed inventories of these resources and suggest parameters for operation and development of the parks.

NVRPA has completed a draft General Management Plan (GMP) for the 1,003-acre Pohick Bay Regional Park. Plans for Bull Run and Hemlock Overlook Regional Parks are in their final stages.

3. Fairfax ReLeaf

Fairfax ReLeaf is a non-profit (501(c)3), non-governmental organization of private volunteers who plant and preserve trees, restore habitat, and improve community appearance in Northern Virginia. They have testified to County officials and politicians that an unacceptably rapid rate of tree loss in Fairfax County continues. They state that the County has not taken effective steps to stem this loss of forest infrastructure. They are very active in tree plantings and are always eager to sign up new volunteers. If interested, contact them at (703) 324-1409.

4. Northern Virginia Conservation Trust

Past EQAC reports have recommended that the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors form public-private partnerships for the purpose of obtaining easements on environmentally sensitive land. EQAC pointed out that entities such as The Nature Conservancy use easements very successfully as a way of protecting environmentally sensitive properties. With the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding on June 20, 2001 between the Fairfax County

Board of Supervisors and the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust (NVCT), such a public-private partnership now exists.

The Northern Virginia Conservation Trust (NVCT) was founded in 1994 as the Fairfax Land Preservation Trust. In 1999, they changed their name to The Northern Virginia Conservation Trust to better reflect the regional scope of their organization. NVCT is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit land trust dedicated to preserving and enhancing the natural and historic resources of Northern Virginia. NVCT also has formed public-private partnership with Arlington County and owns properties or easements in Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, Prince William, and Stafford Counties.

During Fiscal Year 2003 (July 1, 2002 to June 30, 2003), NVCT recorded nine new conservation easements and two easement amendments as shown in Table III-1.

NVCT also has a public outreach program – Adventures in Conservation – to bring hands-on volunteerism and environmental education opportunities. They had 344 hours in volunteer conservation activities (consisting of invasive plant removal, native seed collection, and tree plantings) and 502 hours in environmental education activities.

EQAC encourages all landowners whose property contains environmentally sensitive land such as wetlands, stream valleys, and forests to consider contacting NVCT and to learn more about easements. If these landowners grant an easement, they will not only protect sensitive land, but can realize some financial benefits. A perpetual easement donation that provides public benefit by permanently protecting important natural, scenic, and historic resources may qualify as a Federal tax-deductible charitable donation. Under the Virginia Land Conservation Act of 1999, qualifying perpetual easements donated after January 1, 2000 may enable the owner to use a portion of the value of that gift as a state income tax credit. Fairfax County real estate taxes could also be reduced if the easement lowers the market value of the property.

Additional information on NVCT can be found on their Web site, http://www.nvct.org.

Table III-1
NVCT Conservation Easements (July 1, 2002 to June 30, 2003)

Name	Comments
Solarz Easement (Dranesville)	Six acres in McLean with significant areas of EQC and forests
Handley Easements I & II (Lee)	Two adjacent properties in Central Springfield area that buffer Calamo Run (a major tributary of Accotink Creek)
Evans/Greenspring Easement (Mason)	A partially forested property buffering Greenspring Garden Park in Annandale
Sloan Easement (Hunter Mill)	An easement conserving the landscape of an historic Victorian house in the Windover Heights Historic District of Vienna
Ruckstuhl Easement Amendment (Providence)	An amendment to NVCT's previous easement on this seven acres in the Falls Church area that further restricted allowable structures on this land
Thompson House Easement (Sully)	This easement protects this Civil War era house that was recently moved to allow for a road expansion of West Ox Road
Clifton Betterment Association Easement (Springfield)	Conserving a property with a historic barn and Popes Head Creek in the Town of Clifton
Laughlin Easements I & II (Mt. Vernon)	Two properties on the Potomac River in the Mt. Vernon area, providing both riparian and scenic conservation of these properties
Cobb Easement Amendment (Dranesville)	An amendment to NVCT's previous easement on this property adding an additional 2.4 acres to make a 14 acre conserved area in Great Falls

Source: *Fiscal Year 2003 Final Report*, Letter From Paul Gilbert, NVCT President, to Mr. Anthony Griffin, Fairfax County Executive, July 15, 2003.

5. Reston Association

The Reston Association has been making a concerted effort to remove the most aggressive of the invasive exotic plant species on the Reston Association's natural areas. They have initiated a monthly volunteer work force of "Weed Warriors" that meet on the fourth Saturday of every month. They have worked on removing Oriental Bittersweet, Chinese Privet, Bamboo, and Autumn Olive. They received a $3,000 matching grant from the Virginia Department of Forestry to fund tools and the printing of an informational brochure that will go to Reston homeowners explaining concerns about non-native invasive plants.

The Reston Association entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the United States Geological Survey and the John W. Powell National Center to establish cooperation regarding the issue of invasive species. The John W. Powell Center is one of the largest tracts of forest remaining in Reston, and much of the property is undisturbed forest.

For more information on the Reston Association's activities, visit their Web site at http://www.reston.org.

6. Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District

The Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District (NVSWCD) continues to provide leadership in the area of bioengineering techniques in streambank stabilization and in the general area of erosion and stormwater control. An example of this is in the Accotink Creek Streambank Stabilization Project, a partnership among NVSWCD, the Fairfax County Park Authority, Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF), and the Fairfax County Department of Public Works. Like many streams in Fairfax County, Accotink Creek has serious erosion.

Below the dam of Lake Accotink, VDOF and NVSWCD demonstrated stream bank stabilization techniques to 40 participants at the end of an intensive three-day workshop. The group was shown several bioengineering techniques to protect the banks and improve habitat, including biodegradable logs and erosion control matting, shrubs and live stakes, and cedar revetments.

NVSWCD also participated in a number of special projects:

- Laurel Hill – The Laurel Hill development is located on 280 acres previously part of the D.C. Department of Corrections prison site in the Lorton area. The development includes residential housing, roads, and schools. Fairfax County has required the developer to provide a comprehensive pre- and post-construction monitoring plan to determine the impact on the site's streams and wetlands. NVSWCD is assisting the Department of Public Works and Environmental Services in reviewing and supervising the outcome of the monitoring.

- Government Center Stormwater Management Dry Ponds Retrofit – NVSWCD's proposal for retrofitting an existing stormwater management pond was implemented in fall, 2001. NVSWCD staff prepared the design and helped in planting the pond following construction.

- Huntley Meadows – NWSWCD assisted the Fairfax County Park Authority in developing a plan to decrease the amount of sediment from

two streams (Barnyard Run and Dogue Creek) flowing into Huntley Meadows wetlands.

- Lake Martin – NVSWCD reviewed Fairfax County's proposal for retrofitting two existing stormwater management ponds and stabilizing the streams above Lake Martin.

7. Fairfax County Wetlands Board

If you own property on the waterfront in Fairfax County, you may need a permit before you build or make improvements on your property. These activities, known as land disturbing activities, often require a permit if done in an area that has been identified as a tidal wetlands. Land disturbing activities include the following:

- Any construction project on or adjacent to a tidal body of water;
- Any construction project in which fill material is place in or near wetlands;
- Construction of bridges, tunnels or roads which may have an impact on wetlands, either tidal or non-tidal; or
- Projects designed to protect property adjacent to shorelines

The Office of Public Affairs worked with staff to develop a Wetlands Permitting information piece to explain the County's Wetland Permitting process. This information piece is now on the County's Web site at http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/gov/ocp/wetlands/wetlands.pdf.

The Fairfax County Wetlands Board held three public hearings for shoreline erosion control projects during the 2002-2003 fiscal year. One shoreline erosion control project was approved during that time.

Staff reviewed approximately thirty-one (31) Joint Permit Applications to determine if permits were required from the Wetlands Board during 2002-2003.

The Chair of the Wetlands Board has been working with the County Attorney's Office to investigate the feasibility of adopting a wetlands mitigation policy, which would encourage the minimization of wetland losses and require compensation for those losses. The Wetlands Board has not yet taken official action on this matter.

For further information contact the Wetlands Board at:

Fairfax County Wetlands Board Staff
Department of Planning and Zoning, Planning Division
12055 Government Center Parkway, Suite 730
Fairfax, VA 22035-5504
(703) 324-1210

8. Virginia Department of Forestry

The Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF) has provided forestry related services in Fairfax County for over 30 years. They are also participating in several efforts aimed at improving riparian zones and stream bank stabilization projects.

VDOF partnered with volunteers from the Difficult Run Community Conservancy, Potomac Conservancy, Timberline Corporation, George Mason University Students, the Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District, and Scout troops to plant approximately 1,000 seedlings in Fairfax County in 2002. A total of 110 volunteers helped with the plantings. This added 500 linear feet to the previous riparian buffer reforestation efforts in Fairfax County. Sites for these plantings were:

- Lake Royal;
- Green Spring Village Retirement Community;
- Wolf Trap Run Stream Valley Park; and
- Difficult Run Stream Valley Park.

VDOF participated in the Fairfax County Arbor Day (April 26) at the Northern Virginia Community College. VDOF gave 500 seedlings to citizens for plantings on their property.

VDOF continues to sponsor stream bank stabilization projects in Fairfax County. One 2002 project was a partnership project with the Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District and the Fairfax County Department of Public Works and Environmental Services. The site of the project was Lake Accotink, where 11 root wads were used for stabilization of about 300 linear feet of stream bank. Also, in partnership with the Potomac Conservancy, 200 live stakes were cut and installed on 150 linear feet of riverbank on the Potomac River.

To support the VDOF goal of "Conserving the Forest Baseline," VDOF worked closely with the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust. VDOF provided baseline studies for four conservation easements in 2002.

VDOF has promoted the concept of bioretention rain gardens for the past eight years. VDOF did plans and surveys for eight potential rain gardens in 2002. Of these sites surveyed, two rain gardens were implemented.

A new program, "Growing Native", was initiated by the Potomac Watershed Partnership (PWP). VDOF is active in the PWP and participated in the "Growing Native" project to collect acorns. The acorns are given to State Forestry nurseries to plant and grow seedlings for the Commonwealth of Virginia. Fairfax County citizens participated as volunteers (167 manhours), collecting 665 pounds of acorns, black walnuts, and hickory nuts for the VDOF nurseries.

VDOF offers public education programs promoting environmental initiatives. In 2002, VDOF personnel gave 12 presentations about riparian buffers, stream and watershed restoration, forest management, protection and conservation, and the use of rain gardens to promote stream protection.

9. Virginia Department of Transportation

Unavoidable impacts to water resources with Fairfax County that occur during highway construction projects are mitigated as required by federal and state laws and regulations. The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) is currently constructing two wetland mitigation projects within Fairfax County:

- In the Dranesville District, VDOT created a wetland project along Dranesville Road near Sugarland Run to mitigate for construction impacts from the Fairfax County Parkway. The site was planted in fall, 2002 and is currently being monitored for five years.

- In the Braddock District, VDOT has under construction a wetlands project near the Virginia Railway Express in Burke. These wetlands are being created to mitigate for construction impacts from the Roberts Parkway Bridge Overpass and the Springfield Interchange Improvement Project. The Corps of Engineers has authorized this project and planting was to have taken place in the summer of 2003.

VDOT works with volunteer groups (such as Fairfax ReLeaf) in their reforestation efforts. Additionally, VDOT has included landscaping in several VDOT construction projects, including:

- Lorton Road Park and Ride;
- Fairfax County Parkway between Fawn Ridge Lane and Walnut Branch Road;
- Springfield Interchange Improvement Project, Phase 4; and

- Ox Road between Burke Lake Road and Davis Drive (scheduled for fall, 2003).

VDOT is now exploring the use of warm season native grasses along the VDOT right-of-way. Native grasses have been seeded or planted in selected loop areas of the Route 28/Route 50 interchange and the Route 123/I-66 interchange.

10. Urban Forestry

a. Urban Forestry Division

In FY 2002, the Urban Forestry Division continued to serve a unique and diverse set of customers. The Urban Forestry Division customer base includes citizens, builders, developers, planners, engineers, landscape architects, private arborists, and other County staff and agencies, including the Board of Supervisors (BOS), Planning Commission, Tree Commission, Environmental and Facilities Review Division (EFRD), Environmental and Facilities Inspections Division (EFID), Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ), Office of Capital Facilities (OCF), and the School Board.

Table III-2 summarizes the workload of UFD based on the requests for assistance that were completed for FY 2000, 2001, and 2002. These figures demonstrate that the number of requests for assistance in FY 2002 was almost identical to 2001. This 2002 workload, however, was accomplished with seven Urban Forester II positions, not the eight Foresters in 2001. The eighth position became open in 2002 and was not filled due to budget constraints.

A significant amount of staff time in 2002, however, was also dedicated to preparation of amendments to the Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Ordinance, and Public Facilities Manual (PFM) relating to County tree cover requirements, and tree and vegetation preservation and planting. UFD staff provided presentations on the amendments to the Planning Commission and BOS. The amendments package was approved by the Planning Commission on January 30, 2002 and received final approval by the BOS on February 11, 2002.

UFD staff provided training to Virginia Tech forestry, urban forestry, and landscape students as invited class instructors. Staff continued to provide training to new inspectors in EFID on County Code requirements for vegetation preservation and planting.

Table III-2 Urban Forestry Division Workload FY 2001 and 2002		
Type of Assignment	**Number of Completed Requests**	
Fiscal Year	***2001***	***2002***
Waivers	64	70
Zoning Cases	208	187
EFRD Requests: Plan Review	786	723
EFRD Requests: Site Inspections	725	743
Other (BOS, FCPA, Other County Agencies, etc.)	559	611
Hazardous Trees	25	27
Total	**2,367**	**2,361**

In 2002, the Urban Forestry Division continued to work on strategic planning activities. A Leadership Team comprised on every member of the Urban Forestry and Forest Pest Management Sections was formed. In late 2002, the Leadership Team released a Division Mission Statement and a draft Vision as follows:

"The mission of the Fairfax County Urban Forestry Division is to enhance the quality of life in our community by ensuring the vitality of the urban forest, its management, and the preservation of the natural environment. We promote compatibility between the developed and natural communities through science, education, shared knowledge and strong partnerships."

"Our Vision is to cultivate a healthy and functional urban forest and to educate and inspire the community to value, conserve and enhance this essential resource."

It is anticipated that the Mission Statement and Vision will be used to navigate a strategic planning process that will continue into 2003, that will eventually generate a 5-year Strategic Plan and Countywide Urban Forestry Management Plan.

b. Gypsy Moth Program

The gypsy moth was first detected in Fairfax County in 1981. To avoid the environmental, economic, and health hazards associated with this pest the Board of Supervisors enacted an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Program to control the gypsy moth. The purpose of the program is to reduce

gypsy moth populations below defoliating levels. The goal of the program is to minimize the environmental and economic impacts of the pest by limiting the amount of tree mortality and use of pesticides in the environment. The control methods considered annually are:

- **Mechanical**: the gypsy moth egg mass Search, Scrape, and Destroy Campaign and Burlap Banding for Gypsy Moth Caterpillars. These are citizen involvement programs.
- **Biological**: the release and monitoring of gypsy moth parasites and pathogens.
- **Chemical**: the aerial and ground applications of Diflubenzuron and Bacillus thurinaiensis (Bt) on high infestations.
- **Educational**: the self-help program and lectures to civic associations and other groups.

In calendar year 2002, gypsy moth caterpillar populations decreased significantly compared to previous years. It is impossible to determine whether this decrease is a sign that populations will remain low for the next few years or if they will increase to moderate levels. The gypsy moth staff will continue to monitor populations in the fall of 2003, and treatment is probable in 2004.

Egg mass surveys conducted by staff in the fall of 2002 indicated that 1,400 acres in four areas of the County had gypsy moth infestations that warranted aerial treatment in the spring of 2003. All of the treatment areas were located in the Mason Neck area of the County. In addition to the aerial treatment areas, there were 50 acres in isolated areas that warranted ground treatment. The pesticide used for these treatments was Bacillus thuringiensis (Bt), a material registered with the Environmental Protection Agency for use against the gypsy moth caterpillar in forested, residential communities.

Gypsy moth populations have increased in Virginia and the northeast. There was no detected defoliation by the gypsy moth in Fairfax County last year.

Experts agree that the reason for the current population decrease is due to the fungus Entomaphaga maimaiga. This fungus was introduced from Japan and can now be found throughout the generally infested areas of the gypsy moth. After a period of heavy rain, caterpillars come in contact with the spores of this fungus and are quickly infected. Record high rainfall amounts for the spring of 2003 probably had an effect on decreasing gypsy moth populations. Information concerning the biology of this fungus can been found in previous Annual Reports on the Environment or by contacting the Forest Pest Program office.

c. Update on Effort to Control Cankerworm

The fall cankerworm is native to the United States and feeds on a broader range of trees than the gypsy moth. Periodic outbreaks of this pest are common, especially in older declining forest stands. The area of the County that had the most severe infestations of fall cankerworm was in the Mount Vernon District. Typically, this insect will defoliate in the early spring when the trees are able to withstand the impacts and little long-term damage is expected; however, tree mortality is possible when combined with conditions that place stress on trees, such as drought. Nuisance to homeowners occurs when large numbers of caterpillars hang from the trees and migrate to the ground.

The Forest Pest Program conducted a large aerial treatment program during the spring of 2003. Staff has monitored for adult female moths throughout the Mount Vernon and Lee Districts in January of 2001, 2002, and 2003. The results of the winter, 2002 – 2003 monitoring effort indicated that the 2,100 acres of the Mason Neck area required aerial treatment in the spring of 2003. The pesticide used for these treatments was Bacillus thuringiensis (Bt), a material registered with the Environmental Protection Agency for use against the fall cankerworm caterpillar in forested, residential communities. During the spring of 2003, County staff supervised contracted staff in ground spraying approximately 61 acres.

The Forest Pest Program will monitor for fall cankerworm again this winter. It is expected that populations of this pest will be low in the near future.

d. Tree Preservation Task Force

The Tree Preservation Task Force met once on July 10, 2002 to conduct an annual review of the status of its recommendations and to discuss the status of HB 484, which is proposed legislation submitted by Fairfax County to the 2002 Virginia General Assembly to amend Code of Virginia §15.2-961. During that meeting, HB 484 was discussed by representatives of the building industry and State Senator Janet Howell, who was the patron of the legislation. In order to maximize chances for adoption of HB 484, a plan was formulated to communicate the intent and purpose of the legislation to the building industry. As a consequence, County staff met with local representatives of the building industry and local environmental groups to discuss issues relevant to the legislation. As a result, new language was generated to address the concerns of both groups and is anticipated to be used in any tree preservation legislation that is forwarded in future legislative programs.

The Tree Preservation Task Force activities for the year 2002 primarily focused on County staff completing recommendation #33: "Amend the Residential Density Criteria and the Environment Section of the Comprehensive Plan to place a greater emphasis on forest cover retention, tree preservation and

afforestation such as by adding new criteria that pertain specifically to these issues."

On September 9, 2002, the Board of Supervisors adopted new Residential Density Criteria. A separate criterion (#4) for tree preservation and tree cover requirements was added with the following text:

"All rezoning applications for residential developments, regardless of the proposed density, should be designed to take advantage of the existing quality tree cover. If quality tree cover exists on site as determined by the County, it is highly desirable that developments meet most if not all of their tree cover requirements by preserving and, where feasible and appropriate, transplanting existing trees.

Tree cover in excess of ordinance requirements is highly desirable. Proposed utilities, including stormwater management and outfall facilities and sanitary lines should be located to avoid conflict with tree preservation and planting areas."

In 2002, The Urban Forestry Division actively worked on Tree Preservation Task Force Recommendation #37 to "conduct periodic tree and forest cover analysis." This recommendation was addressed by a grant for satellite mapping of the County's tree cover and analysis of tree cover data, and will be covered in detail later in this section.

The Tree Preservation Task Force will continue to meet to review the progress and effectiveness of the 37 recommendations that the task force forwarded to the Board of Supervisors in 1999. A major subject that is likely to be examined in 2003 and beyond is the perceived need for state enabling tree preservation legislation.

e. Tree Commission Activities and Issues in 2002

Several vacant Tree Commissioner positions were filled so that each of the County's magisterial districts was represented. Representatives from the Virginia Department of Forestry and the non-profit organization Fairfax ReLeaf were also appointed.

In response to the tragedy of September 11, 2001, the Commission launched an effort to plan and construct the 9-11 Memorial Garden. The Memorial consists of a formal landscaped garden on the grounds of the Fairfax County Government Center. Residents of Fairfax County that perished on September 11, 2001 were honored by the Board of Supervisors at the Memorial groundbreaking ceremony in September, 2002. The 9-11 Memorial Garden was dedicated after its completion in the fall of 2003.

In addition to participating in numerous public events such as the Fairfax County Earth Day-Arbor Day Celebration and the County's Land Conservation Awards program, Commissioners also provided input on various land use and development proposals affecting trees and landscaping. The Commission continues to support and advocate for the passage of legislation dealing with tree preservation and the use of native and desirable landscape trees during development.

In 2002, the Commissioners continued to utilize their monthly meetings to research and discuss County tree and landscape issues and policy. Various speakers made presentations to the Commission. The Urban Forestry Division staff provided several presentations on the process of land development including tree preservation and protection, tree cover requirements, and landscaping requirements for new developments and for commercial revitalization projects.

f. Summary of Proposed/Anticipated Changes to Tree Preservation Enabling Legislation

The proposal that Fairfax County prepared to send as part of its 2002 Legislative program to amend § 15.2-961 was continued to the 2003 Virginia Legislative Assembly, where it lost its active status in early 2003. However, components of the proposed language survived in other legislative proposals and were adopted by the Virginia General Assembly in 2003. These amendments allow localities to regulate trees species that are planted for tree cover credits, and require jurisdictions to grant additional tree cover incentives for preserving trees. Although the newly adopted language is not entirely what Fairfax County proposed, it should be considered as a measure of progress in the attempt to acquire local authority to require tree preservation during land development.

Although the existing language of § 15.2-961 provides that "Existing trees which are to be preserved may be included to meet all or part of the canopy requirements," ordinances based on this language are focused primarily on tree replacement. Local tree canopy ordinances allow the requirements to be met exclusively through the planting of nursery-grown trees if pre-development tree canopy is non-existent, or the development of the allowed use necessitates the removal of the pre-development tree canopy.

Any future proposals to amend § 15.2-961 should:

- Provide localities with a mechanism to quantify tree preservation expectations based on pre-development tree cover. For example, if a proposed development site is covered 30 percent with trees, then a locality could expect that 30 percent of the ten-year tree cover requirement will be provided by preserving existing tree canopy.

- Preserve trees in higher percentages than currently realized, yet provide a flexible modification system that acknowledges land development realities and constraints.

- Target land uses that result in high tree cover loss by changing the existing requirement for low-density residential from 20 to 30 percent.

- Provide implicit incentive language allowing localities to grant additional tree cover credits for the preservation of trees that realize environmental, ecological, historic or cultural objectives.

The proposal should enlarge the nature of current Code of Virginia § 15.2-961, which is focused primarily on tree replacement, by placing greater emphasis on the preservation of existing trees. The proposal should also support recommendations by the New Millennium Occoquan Watershed Task Force and Tree Preservation Task Force that call for increasing tree preservation levels during the development process.

It will be imperative that future proposals for tree preservation authority address concerns expressed by the local building industry and environmental groups to the extent possible without compromising the core intent of increasing tree preservation.

g. Status of Grant Proposal for Satellite Mapping of the County's Tree Cover and Analysis of Tree Cover Data

In 2002, the Urban Forestry Division continued efforts to devise a Countywide map for use as a layer on the County's geographic information system that will delineate the distribution of naturally occurring and landscaped vegetation, using the National Vegetation Classification System (NVCS). This classification system was originally developed by the Nature Conservancy and has been adapted by the United States Federal Standard Geographic Data Committee as the Federal Government Standard FGDC-STD-005, 1997.

This classification system will be used to map the entire County into areas that are currently populated with native tree, shrub, and herbaceous plant species, as these species group into larger associations, or plant communities. These communities usually coincide with distinct environmental gradients and are dependent on the presence of specific abiotic factors, such as elevation, climate, geologic substrate, and soil and hydraulic regimes.

In 2002, the Urban Forestry Division accomplished the following goals towards the mapping and identification of natural vegetation communities

that exist in Northern Virginia using the National Vegetation Classification System:

- Partnered with Fairfax County GIS Office in order to coordinate use of GIS/GPS software and computer equipment.
- Identified ground truthing areas needed for entire study area in order to establish initial database of reflective values.
- Met with Fairfax County Park Authority staff and Prince William County to devise data collection methodology.
- Finalized data collection methodology and generated needed forms and databases to record data.
- Completed training of Urban Forestry Division Staff, Park Authority Naturalist Staff, Huntley Meadows Park Volunteers, and Prince William County Arborist in data collection methodology.
- Completed data collection and GPS location of 165 of 210 data collection points.
- Worked with Fairfax County Department of Purchasing and Supply Management to develop sole source contract with DigitalGlobe Service, Inc. to purchase satellite imagery.
- Acquired 450 km^2 (covers Eastern Fairfax County, Arlington County and City Of Alexandria) of the total 2,106 km^2 of needed 2.6-meter multispectral satellite imagery.
- Contracted with DigitalGlobe, Inc. to acquire remaining 1,656 km^2 of satellite imagery by summer/fall of 2004.

Once the entire landmass of Fairfax County is mapped using the National Vegetation Classification System, a vegetation map will be produced for each of the County's 30 major watersheds. These data should provide a valuable benchmark that can be used to formulate and evaluate the effectiveness of Countywide vegetation and ecosystem management policies. It is anticipated that Urban Forestry Division will need to continue this mapping effort into 2003 and early 2004.

11. Riparian and Other Bioengineering Projects

Stream bank erosion is a natural process, which begins with water movement from uplands. In areas of urban development, impervious (watertight) surfaces replace vegetative soil coverings, resulting in less water soaking into the ground. As a result, more runoff flowing over land surfaces enters streams, causing excessive stream bank erosion.

Serious undercutting and sloughing of stream banks can occur when stream banks are not adequately protected by riparian vegetation. This stream bank erosion impacts water quality, causing serious problems for fish and wildlife as well as downstream landowners and communities. Thus, water quality and the flora and fauna associated with a healthy stream are closely linked. (See

Chapter I, *Water Resources*, for more comments on water quality and stormwater management.)

Many methods exist to stabilize a stream bank. Traditionally, hard structures such as concrete and stone have been the quick fix. These methods may slow down the erosion process but are costly, unattractive, and environmentally objectionable. Today, many engineers and contractors rely on *bioengineering* techniques that involve the use of living plant materials to stabilize and rebuild soils and vegetation.

Some bioengineering techniques include:

Vegetation -- The stability of a stream bank depends on the establishment of permanent vegetation that can withstand water inundation as well as dry conditions. Live cuttings from willows, dogwoods, and other species that root quickly are incorporated into the soil. Root mass keeps soil in place, and the flexible leaves and branches slow down the flow of water.

Tree revetments -- Large whole trees anchored lengthwise along eroding banks with their bottom ends upstream and overlapping one another may provide continuous protection to the bank.

Biologs -- Biodegradable logs made of processed coconut husk fiber called "coir" can hold soils and plants in place. A biolog is generally eight to ten feet long and about one foot in diameter. The material is tough, flexible, and absorbent. By the time the "log" biodegrades in seven or eight years, a root network of plants has been established through and behind it.

With such innovative bioengineering techniques and proper planning and design, we can restore stream banks, reduce the amount of pollutants and sediment going into streams, improve animal and fish habitat, and create a more aesthetically pleasing environment.

A number of agencies are participating in projects using bioengineering techniques to protect and restore stream valleys. These include: the Fairfax County Park Authority; the Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District; the Virginia Department of Transportation; the Virginia Department of Forestry; and the Fairfax County Department of Public Works and Environmental Services. Their actions in this area are mentioned above.

The Maintenance and Stormwater Management Division (MSMD) of the Fairfax County Department of Public Works and Environmental Services currently performs inspections on six privately maintained rain gardens once every five years. In addition, MSMD has the maintenance responsibility for five County owned rain gardens of which three are located at the MSMD maintenance complex and two at other County complexes.

In support of the 1999 *Interim Policy Regarding Tree Preservation and Planting in and Around Stormwater Management Ponds*, MSMD changed its pond-mowing practices during the summer of 2000 to take advantage of its economic and environmental benefits. The *interim policy* has allowed MSMD to reduce the scope of work for contract mowing in-and-around stormwater management facilities. The mowing of dam embankments, access roads, and emergency spillways continues. However, pond floors, side slopes, and other non-critical areas are no longer mowed. This has resulted in an average decrease in mowed areas of 60% per pond and has allowed the emergence of wet meadow pond floors at more than 500 sites in Fairfax County. This natural process allows for improved functionality by enhancing sediment removal and nutrient uptake rates. MSMD continues to work extensively with numerous homeowners' associations, property owners, Boy Scout groups, etc. to have many of the County's ponds planted with trees, shrubs, and herbaceous wet meadow and wetland plants. To date, over 45 ponds have been planted with ten to fifteen more slated for this year.

12. Gunston Cove Ecological Study

Gunston Cove is a tidal freshwater embayment of the Potomac River located approximately 20 miles south of Washington, D.C. The Cove is formed by the juncture of Pohick Bay and Accotink Bay, through which the waters of Pohick Creek and Accotink Creek flow to the Potomac River.

An ecological study of Gunston Cove, conducted by the Department of Environmental Science and Policy and Department of Biology at George Mason University, and supported by the Department of Public Works, continued during 2002. This study is a continuation of work originated in 1984 at the request of the County's Environmental Quality Advisory Council and the Department of Public Works. This ongoing monitoring program was established to determine impacts from local point sources and nonpoint sources and evaluate the status of the Gunston Cove ecosystem. Information from this study is intended to form the basis for well-grounded management strategies for maintenance and improvement of water quality and biotic resources in the tidal Potomac.

The executive summary of the 2002 report by Jones and Kelso summarizes details from their report and covers water quality, phytoplankton biomass, zooplankton, fish larvae and fish, and benthic organisms. The following is extracted from this summary.

Long-term trends were examined for a wide range of water quality and biological parameters. Linear regressions were conducted to allow detection of long-term linear trends. In the cove, chlorophyll *a*, photosynthetic rate, BOD, total phosphorus, and organic nitrogen had significant negative coefficients indicating a net decrease over the study period (1983/4-2001). These results are consistent with a significant decline in phytoplankton biomass over the study

period. Of the dissolved nutrients, only nitrate exhibited a significant linear regression coefficient over the period and it has declined greatly.

In the river, there have been some signs of an increase in phytoplankton. While Chlorophyll *a* did not show a significant change, three trends were consistent with increased phytoplankton: photosynthetic rate was significantly higher, dissolved oxygen exhibited a positive regression coefficient, and light extinction coefficient was more negative. The river exhibited significant declines in all forms of dissolved nitrogen as well as in nitrogen:phosphorus ratio. From last year's report (summarized in the *2002 Annual Report on the Environment*), Jones and Kelso noted that phosphorus loading from the Noman M. Cole, Jr. Pollution Control Plant was greatly curtailed in the early 1980s. The observed pattern in phytoplankton biomass in the cove can be tied directly to the management action to decrease phosphorus loadings if we assume temporary storage of phosphorus during the pre-decrease period, which continued to be released in significant amounts for several subsequent years until largely exhausted or covered by 1989.

All zooplankton taxa have exhibited significant linear increases since 1990. Those with particularly high rates of increase include the rotifer *Keratella* and the chydorid crustacea. These increases may be related to decreases in planktivorous fish, which have generally occurred during the 1990s. In 2001, there was an increased presence of these fish and the dominant large cladoceran (a prime food source) was lower than in recent years.

The annual reports by George Mason University are proving to be very useful in tracking changes in Gunston Cove as a result of changes at the Pollution Control Plant. These changes at the plant have benefited the Cove. The studies should continue so as to get a better idea of long-term trends (as thus see the impact of changes at the Pollution Control Plant and other changes that may impact the Cove such as changes in land use in the watershed).

13. Agricultural and Forestal Districts

Landowners may apply to place their land in special Agricultural and Forestal (A&F) Districts that are taxed at reduced rates. A&F Districts, which are created by the Commonwealth of Virginia, must have 200 or more acres. A&F Districts of local significance, governed by the Fairfax County A&F District Ordinance, must have at least 20 acres and must be kept in this status for a minimum of eight years.

Fairfax County's policy is to conserve and protect and to encourage the development and improvement of its important agricultural and forest lands for the production of food and other agricultural and forest products. It is also Fairfax County policy to conserve and protect agricultural and forest lands as valued natural and ecological resources that provide essential open spaces for

clean air sheds, watershed protection, wildlife habitat, aesthetic quality, and other environmental purposes. The purpose of the Local Agricultural and Forestal District program is to provide a means by which Fairfax County may protect and enhance agricultural and forest lands of local significance as a viable segment of the Fairfax County economy and as an important economic and environmental resource.

In 2002, there was a loss of two Local A&F Districts, but there was no loss of Statewide A&F Districts. There are now 40 Local Districts and four Statewide Districts. The two losses were:

- Dranesville: loss of 27.37 acres through the withdrawal of the Leggett District (AF 99-D-001); and
- Springfield: loss of 37 acres through the expiration of the Briarfield Manor District.

Therefore, the total acreage of all districts has gone from 4,095.15 acres in 2001 to 4,030.76 in 2002.

14. South Van Dorn Street Phase III Road Project

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers issued a permit for the construction of South Van Dorn Phase III on May 28, 1996. Conditions contained in the permit required that no construction could start on the roadway until several conditions were completed. Three of these conditions are aimed at protecting Huntley Meadows Park.

One condition is that seven parcels of land (102 acres) adjacent to Huntley Meadows Park must be purchased by Fairfax County. This is in lieu of creating wetlands for the five acres of wetlands that will be destroyed in road construction. These 102 acres contain about 69 acres of wetlands and 33 acres of uplands. This action will ensure preservation of the wetlands contained in this 102-acre tract as well as provide a valuable addition to Huntley Meadows Park.

The County now has possession of these seven parcels of land, which will be turned over the FCPA to become part of Huntley Meadows Park. The Corps also required that this land remain natural (as is the rest of Huntley Meadows Park).

Another condition by the Corps required stormwater management improvements on eight ponds in and around Greendale Golf Course. The last pond, at the intersection of South Van Dorn Street and King Centre Drive, was completed in June, 2002.

A third condition by the Corps required that Fairfax County submit a Monitoring and Maintenance Plan for these stormwater improvements. The plan details the monitoring and maintenance requirements for a ten-year period. The Corps approved the plan in October, 2001. The monitoring station was installed in July, 2002.

With the completion of all the conditions imposed by the Corps, construction of the extension of South Van Dorn Street to Telegraph Road started in September, 2002. Fairfax County is providing full-time inspection of the erosion and sediment control measures during construction. Clearing and initial grading operations were completed when rain and winter conditions halted construction. Heavy rains in spring and summer, 2003 further delayed the work. Completion of the roadway will most likely be delayed until 2004.

C. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. EQAC recommends that the County Board of Supervisors develop and implement a Countywide Natural Resource Management Plan – an ecological resources management plan that can be implemented through the policy and administrative branches of the County government structure. Two necessary tasks should be accomplished first -- prepare and adopt a unified Natural Resource Conservation Policy, and complete a Countywide Baseline Natural Resource Inventory. This is a continuing recommendation from past years. EQAC notes that slow progress is being made in this area due to efforts by the Fairfax County Park Authority staff in their efforts to establish a natural resources baseline inventory. The FCPA has developed a Countywide Green Infrastructure Map that appears a basis for a Natural Resource Inventory. Additionally, the Urban Forestry Division is continuing efforts to devise a Countywide map for use as a layer on the County's GIS that will delineate the distribution of naturally occurring and landscaped vegetation. However, these efforts must be supplemented by an inventory of the County that accounts for flora and fauna. The Park Authority is also preparing a Natural Resources Plan for management of the County's parks. This long delayed plan, schedule for completion in the fall of 2002 as of last year's EQAC annual report, is now scheduled for completion in the fall of 2003. EQAC fully supports these efforts, urging that they culminate in a Countywide Resource Management Plan. This is a continuing recommendation for past EQAC reports. EQAC's intent is that Fairfax County should have all the tools in place (the policy and the data) to create a plan that will support the active management and conservation of the County's natural resources.

2. In past Annual Reports, EQAC recommended that the County Board of Supervisors emphasize public-private partnerships that use private actions such as purchase of land and easement by existing or new land trusts to protect forests and other natural resources, including champion/historic trees. With the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Board of Supervisors and the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust, such a public-private partnership came into being. Thus EQAC's recommendation has been satisfied. EQAC commends the Board of Supervisors for this action and recommends continued support for this partnership. EQAC notes that the MOU is for a three-year period and therefore recommends continuing this MOU past the initial three years.

3. In reaction to the limited tree preservation authority provided by the County Code, and recommendations by the Tree Preservation Task Force, Fairfax County initiated a proposal to amend the Virginia State Code § 15.2-96 1, as part of its 2002 strong emphasis on tree preservation. Two bills were introduced in the 2002 Virginia State Legislative Assembly but were tabled until the 2003 session due to opposition from development interests. However, this proposal lost its active status in early 2003. While components of the proposed language survived in other legislative proposals adopted by the Virginia General Assembly in 2003, the newly adopted language is primarily focused on tree replacement. EQAC recommends that the Board of Supervisors continue to support the proposals to amend the Virginia State Code § 15.2-961 by placing greater emphasis on preservation of existing trees.

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